




Imprimatur,

Joh. Garthwait, Reverendissimo in
Christo Patri, ac Dom. Dom. Ri-
chardo Archiepis. Eboracensi, à
Sacris Domesticis.

Datum Episcopo.
Thorpz. Oñ.
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THE
MYSTER
OF
AFFLICTIONS.
Being the Substance of a
SERMON
Discourfed.

By W. S. Master of Arts, and Rector
of ESKRICK.

*Ad hoc corrūpit ut emendet,
Ad hoc emendat ut feruet, Cyprian.*

T O R K,
Printed by Stephen Bulkley, 1668.

THE

MYSTERY

OF

ATTENTION

Being the Substance of a

SERMON

Discovered

By W. S. Miller of Andover
of Essex

Ad hoc committee on church
Ad hoc committee on church

T O R K

Printed by Stephen Bulfinch 1868



To my Honoured, and his very good
Mother, *Mis. Elizabeth Sipton.*

Madam,

THese Collections being Preached
unto You, whilst I was Your
Minister, had Your Approba-
tion and Hearing: now they
request Your Acceptation, and Your Read-
ing. And though they lose much of their
life, (Printing being but a dry Preaching)
I hope they will not lose their labour, they
issuing onely from an Obedience to Your
Commands, which, to my endeavours, have
alwayes been candid, and favourable.

I have often been thinking, That when

B

Age,

Age, or Sicknesse, or any other bodily infirmity deprives us of the Publick Ministration of the Word, there are two wayes whereby we may comfort, and improve our selves; Either by *Conversing with Men*; or with their Works.

1. By *Conversing with Men*, when we may have them: So the Disciples did with Christ; And the Eunuch did so with Philip. The breathing Instructions of good men are most profitable, and have an operation in them beyond the dead Letter. Now, of all men, those that by Office are to speak a word to weary soules, are most to be conferred with, as speaking to us in Christs stead: We are Ambassadors for Christ, 2 Cor. 5. 20. An Ambassador is one, who is Vicarious, or Officious for another; *Alterius locum tenet* --- He supplies the place of another. But the
Grecians

The Epistle Dedicatory,

Grecians call him *romos*, one that stands in anothers stead; Just such Ambassadors are Ministers; they are Christs Officials, they beare his Person, and stand in his stead; so it follows, We pray you in Christs stead, be ye reconciled to God: Such men as these we must chiefly conferr with, whilst we have them.

2. By Conferring with their Works, (when we want them.) A man that would improve his skill in remote Countries, either adviseth with a Mapp, or with a Traveller. So, a man who would improve his Heavenly skill under the exercise of crosse Providences; either consults with a Traveller (an experienced Traveller) one that hath had his graces exercised under various dispensations; Or els he consults with a Mapp. Jehoshaphat did the one, when he was doubtfull, whether, or no, he

should goe up to Ramoth-Gilead, thinks
it his best course to enquire, and take ad-
vise, (not of the Captains of his Host,
but) of the Prophets of the Lord of
Hosts ; he consults the men. But David
did the other ; he consulted the Mapps---
Thy Testimonies are my delight: and
my Counsellors, Psal. 119. 24. What-
ever duty, whatever divine truth, what-
ever case of Conscience is necessary for
man to know, God doth plainly determine
by his Spirit, answering, and resolving us
by the Voyce of his Written Word ; Da-
vid therefore consults them. Thus Mapps
are of great use, and Books may instruct,
and improve as well as Men. 'Tis Stori-
ed, The Word Read, converted Cyprian.
And Thomas A Kempis was wont to say,
He could finde rest no where — Nisi
in angulo cum libello — but in a corner
with

The Epistle Dedicatory.

with his Bible — so I translate it, 'cause
the best Writing — yet it may be any other
Writing. 'Tis true, we should principally
reade the Book of God, as most fit to in-
fluence our soules, and to improve us.
Theodosius, Alfred, and Alphonfus
King of Arragon, are renowned in Histo-
ry for their constant Reading of the Scri-
ptures: Yet with subordination to that great
Book, we may reade all other good Books,
as means of comfort and improvement —
Give attendance to reading — saith Saint
Paul, (1 Tim. 4. 13.) And indeed St. Paul
himselfe gave so much attendance to read-
ing, that (as you will finde in his Epistle
to Titus, chap. 1. 12.) he confuted the Cre-
tians, and other learned Heathens, out of
the Books of their own Writers, Aratus,
and Menander.

Now, if among many other Books, You
vouchsafe

The Epistle Dedicatory.

vouchsafe Your Eye upon these worthlesse
Papers; it will not onely give a splendor
to them; but, a high favour to him, who
is in all humble Offices,

Your obedient Sonne,

Septemb. 28,
1668.

WILLIAM SHIPTON.

The



THE

MYSTERY
OF

AFFLICTIONS.

Rom. 8. 28.

And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God.—

Is common to men in this World, to be variously exercised, and to have blessings and crosses interchangeably : Even the Saints themselves live under the exercise of crosse-Providences and Events. We are not like the Isle of Rhodes, which Travellers report

Zach.
1. 8.

report to be, *Semper in Sole*, alwayes in the Sunshine, but we are sometimes in Stormes. As the *Pillar of Cloud* had it's light-side, and dark-side ; so have our conditions. Gods Providences, and the change of things, are mystically represented to us, by those *Speckled Horses among the Myrtle-trees* — which were *Red-Horses, Speckled, with White*. Thus God doth speckle out our conditions ; They are sometimes Red and White, sometimes Black and White ; they are seldome of one colour. If *Solomon* had not said, *There is a time to laugh, and a time to mourne* — experience would have made every man a *Solomon* in this respect, and have taught him feelingly to acknowledge ; that, As things never go so ill with men, but they have some *Consolations* ; so, things never go so well with men, but they have some *Afflictions*.

Now as *Afflictions* do often happen under cross Providences ; so, it is hard for a man to gain so great a conquest, as to be submissive under his *Afflictions*, considering how weak the flesh is, and how impatient. It takes delight only in the objects of it's Senses, and is

ver. 26. For we know not what to Pray for, as we ought : but the Spirit helpeth our infirmities -- we know not what to Pray for as we ought -- St. Paul (one would think) had so much skill, as not to ask the thing that was not good, that was not convenient for him ; yet, no sooner had he, A Messenger of Satan, (that is, ^{2 Cor. 12.} an Affliction) sent to buffet him : but he prayed ^{7, 8, 9.} thrice unto the Lord, that it might depart from him. Indeed, as to flesh and blood, which cannot endure Afflictions, it seems to have been a reasonable Petition ; but seeing it was necessary (to cure his spirituall pride) he will should be humbled with Afflictions, he received a Rebuke for his Prayers from God, who tells him, That he would perfect his strength in his weakness, which was more then this great Apostle knew, or understood. Thus also the Sons of Zebedee, in their Petition to Christ, they had a desire to obtain some good thing at his hands, this was a good determination ; but they could think of nothing better, then to be Lordly, and to be advanced to some place of honour : therefore they desire, That they might sit, the one on his right hand, the ^{Mark 10.} other ^{37.}

other on his left hand --- But see how ill they
Ver. 38. sped, Christ tells them, *You know not what ye
aske.* Every one must not go crowned; nor
is honour fit for all men, they were his Disci-
ples, not the worlds, and must rather drink
the Cup of Affliction, then court such high
Ambition. The meaning of the Apostle then
in these words, (*We know not what to Pray for
as we ought: but the spirit ---*) is this, We
know not what condition is good for us,
therefore we must leave all to God, and to
the Spirit of God, who will support us, and
direct us in every condition.

5. From the Cöoperation of all Afflictions, to the good of all beleevers, as in this Verse propounded, --- *We know that all things shall work together for their good* --- These words need no explanation; the meaning is, That all things that happen unto the Saints in this life, (especially Afflictions) are directed by Gods Providence, to their eternall good and happiness; *And this we know*, saith he, --- that is, This truth is confirmed by our own experience, and the experience of all Gods Saints: Beleevers have experimentally found
God

God doing them good, by their Afflictions: David found the mystery of this truth; I know, *Psal. 119, 5.*
O Lord, that thou in thy faithfulness, (that is, in love, and goodness) hast afflicted me; out of pure love and goodness, God brings his people to Afflictions; this troubled Prophet found it so: and seeing other Saints have found, all Saints may expect to find, *All things*, (that is, the worst of things) *working together for their good.* This I call, *The Mystery of Afflictions.* A strange Mystery indeed, (you will say) and an odd kind of working, to gain by the worst, to purchase by losse, and to triumph by Affliction: Yet so it is, *Our light affliction worketh for us, a farr more exceeding weight of glory —* *2 Cor. 4. 17.*
Who have more consolations of Spirit? Who are more renewed in the inner man? Who have more tranquility, and content of mind? then those who submit to God, as knowing his power so great, that he can bring the greatest good out of the greatest evill.

I lay down these two Propositions.

1. *The Mystery of Affliction is such, that*
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it will work for the good of all Christians.

2. *This Mystery of Affliction* should encourage and comfort all Christians.

1. *This Mystery of Affliction* is such, That it will work for the good of all Christians. I might prove this, from the Author of these Afflictions, God himself : As they are directed by his wise Providence, so they must needs tend to this eternal good and happiness. Afflictions come not by chance, nor do they light where they list, but are commissioned from Heaven : *It is the Lord, (saith good old Eli) let him do what he pleaseth.* The destiny of our troubles are written above, by a wise Decree : and as they are wisely ordained ; so, out of a principle of love, they will be wisely exercised upon all Christians ; Thus Christ by his Spirit speaks unto the Churches, ... *As many as I love, I chasten* --- Affliction, like Wormewood, makes the Cup bitter ; yet, how bitter soever the Cup be which I am to drink, Faith shews the soule of a Saint, that it is from the hands of a Heavenly Father, (who though he put some displeasing, will put

2 Sam.
3. 18.

Rev. 3.
19.

but no destroying herbe therein. And therefore may I not say, sayes the soule, as Christ himselfe did, *The cup which my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?* It is in love to my soule all this; God corrects me, with the same hand also, he crowns me. You see, Christ himselfe experimentally found, and so shall all Christians finde, that these Afflictions are not so much our crosses, as our crowns. God will one day recompence their sufferings, and cause all these things to work together for the good of them that love him.

Now if you please, I shall discourse, and discover, That all Afflictions work for our good, these three severall wayes. 1. By promoting Comfort. 2. By promoting Grace. 3. By promoting Glory.

1. All Afflictions work for our good, as they tend to promote Comfort. Great Afflictions are the usuall times for great consolations. John had his Revelation in the Isle of Patmos: and Jacob had glorious Visions, whilst he was flying away from the wrath of his discourteous brother;

brother. He had richer Dreams upon the
heap of stones he layd his weary head on, then
these have perhaps, who sleep upon softer pil-
lows. When was it that Christ was trans-
figured, and his face did shine as the Sun? It
was immediately before his bloody Passion.
Christ was first taken into the Mount, before
he was lifted upon the Cross. It was in the
Wilderness, that God spake to his Church of
a *Canaan*, a comfortable happiness. Indeed,
you may tell me, that the exercise of Religi-
ous duties (more then the exercise of Afflictions)
is a speciall time for comforts. You may
tell me, That when Grace is exercised to pre-
pare our hearts to Prayer, or to make our
soules wait in attendance to the other Ordina-
nces, God fills us full of heavenly consolations.
Thus, when *Hannah* was Praying, what
melody did she finde within? what joy did
surround her? When old *Zachary* was sacrific-
ing, he saw the glorious Vision. Thus, when
Mary sate at Christs feet, hearing the Word,
how did he fill her heart with comfort? You
may tell me, none have sweeter solaces of
joy, and consolation, then those who main-
taine

tain a constant Communion with God in
holy duties : I grant it, it is the Word and
sanctifying Spirit, that doth the main work :
but I say, as Solomon did, *That there is a time
for all things* : There is a season for the Word
to be delivered in, and Affliction-times are
the most seasonable times. When the unruly
Patient is bound hand and foot, you may
search the wound, and apply the plaister : So
when God hath men in fetters of *Affliction*,
and their spirits are tamed, you may then the
better speak to them, and give them counsell,
*If they be bound in fetters, and holden in cords
of affliction : Then he sheweth them their work,
and their transgression. He openeth also their eare
to discipline, and commandeth that they return
from iniquity.* Affliction-times, are disciplina-
ry-times ; perswasions and reasons will then
be heard, which would not before be heard,
which reasons work comforts. Thus, when
did Christ ever Preach such comforts to his
Disciples, as when he was ready to leave them
to the persecuting world, and their soules
began to be sorrowfull at his departure, *I will
Pray the Father, and he shall give you another*

Job 16.

8. 9. 10.

John 14.
16.

D

Com-

Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. Christ was now going from them, and he tells them, *That he could no longer stay* --- and this was sad news to his Disciples, who were ready to break their hearts at his departure. But see how he cheers them again, (and it was the best of comforts) by telling them, *I will Pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he might abide with you for ever.* Beleeve it, here in this Verse, our blessed Saviour was so carefull that his Disciples should not be too much dejected, that he forgot his own bitter Passion, to comfort them; He tells them of a Comforter (which includes all comfort) that should never leave them, especially in *Afflictions*, but abide with them for ever. And this the Disciples found true, for they were full of comfort: And when was this? Immediately before they were carried from the Councell to be scourged, --- *they departed rejoycing* --- Hence did proceed that Heroick spirit, that History reports to be in those primitive Martyrs, who spilt their blood for him, who spilt his blood for them. 'Twas not the face of man could daunt them, their inward

inward consolation did alwayes exceed their outward tribulation; they were even ambitious of the flames, as knowing from these ashes there would come an immortall Phoenix; and from these little Afflictions, there would flow the purchase of eternall comforts. God indeed doth comfort his Saints in all conditions; but he doth never give his Saints so deep a taste of comfort, as in their troubled conditions; he doth never bestow those precious drops of divine consolations in a world of pleasures, but keeps them only to make pleasant the bitter Cup. The very end of God in afflicting, is to fit us for comforting — *Premitt, ut solateat præstat* — saith the Poët -- He afflicts us, that he may comfort us; and this comfort is so much the sweeter, by how much *Affliction* hath been bitterer

*I must enlarge my Discourse, to shew you,
That this Mystery of Afflictions works com-
fort in our hearts two wayes.*

First, By opening a vein of godly sorrow in our hearts. This is the next way to spirituall

comfort against sin, when a man can once spir-
ritually mourne for sin. Now Afflictions open
this vein of godly sorrow; this vein opened,
lets out the corruption; and the corruption
being let out, makes way for spirituall conso-
lation. The blessed Apostle saith of Christ,
Heb. 5. 7. *That in the dayes of his Flesh, (I suppose he
means, whiles he was continually burthened
with temptations, and afflictions) in those
dayes, he offered prayers and supplications, with
strong cryings and tears.* Christ was in a strong
conflict of Affliction; and as his conflict was
strong, so also were his cries. When Jacob
wraffled with the Angel, he did not onely
Pray, but Cry, *He wept, and made supplication.*
Affliction causeth tears and supplication; and
tears and supplication, cause comfort and con-
solation. Water drops from Violets and
Roses, when fire is put under the Still; so
the waters of godly sorrow drops from our
eyes, when the fire of Affliction is upon us.
Beleeve it, God doth usually prepare his peo-
ple for the stamp of Spirituall consolation, by
thus melting them in the fire of Affliction
the hotter the heart, the clearer the Impress-
on

Hofea
12. 4.



on. Thus when God brought that great Affliction, and sickness upon *Hezekiah*, when the Prophet brought him that heavy message, *Set thy house in order, for thou must dye* --- what a vein of grief was opened, and how was his heart softened? How full was he of vehemement and weeping importunity, --- *Hezekiah wept sore, and said, I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart* --- 2 Kings 20. 3. This Visitation brought him to his Tears, and Supplications; and his Tears and Supplication, like *Noah's Dove*, sent from the Arke, brought him at last an Olive-branch of consolations --- Turne again, and tell *Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, I have heard thy Prayers, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will beale thee* --- The God of all comforts would not let him languish long without comforts. Indeed this godly sorrow (the vehemency whereof Affliction causeth) hath the very promise of comfort and consolations: *Blessed are they that mourne, for they shall be comforted*. It is a matter of marvellous comfort to a Believer, when he can kindly mourne for sin.

2 Kings
20. 3.

Mat. 5. 4.

The

The Penitentiall Soul, is secretly a joyfull
Soul. This was the cause of those sweet
smiles, and joyes upon the Apostle's Spirit,
2 Cor. 7. *I rejoyce that you were made sorrowfull after a*
9. 10. *godly manner: For godly sorrow worketh repen-*
tance to salvation — If it work repentance to
salvation; how much the easier to consolati-
on? And so it does, godly sorrows alwayes
bring comfort: This was the mysterious tem-
2 Cor. 6. *per of the Apostles — As sorrowing, yet alwayes*
30. *rejoycing —* Ignorant, and carnall spirits are
stumbled at this expression, and looks upon it
as a Riddle, That the Disciples of Christ
should be sorrowfull, yet alwayes joyfull —
But 'tis a plain case; though they be troubled
without, they have peace within; though
they have matter of sorrowing, in respect of
outward Affliction, they have matter of re-
joycing in respect of inward consolation;
their godly sorrows have the promises of com-
fort, and they shall have it.

Secondly, *Afflictions work comforts in the*
hearts of men, by bringing in more of Gods spiri-
tual, and speciall presence. We have a promise
of Gods immediate presence in times of Affli-
ction,

tion, and this works for our good, and consolation — *I will be with him in trouble*, there's the promise — God will be with us in trouble — And how can it be ill with that man, who hath Gods powerfull presence with him, in his trouble. When God layd that strict charge upon Moses, saying, *Depart, and go up hence, thou, and the people which thou hast brought up out of the Land of Egypt, unto the Land which I swore unto Abraham* — Moses in the 12. and 13. verses, strongly argues the case, in these words, *See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people, and thou hast not let me know what protection, or what consolation I shall have in this Journey.* Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know I have found grace in thy sight. You see, he comes to God with a strong request, and Petitions him, *That he would shew him the way*, that is, that he would shew him what comfort, and what protection he should have in so difficult a way, that by some visible, and ocular demonstration, he might know that he had found favour in his sight. In the 14. verse, *Why, sayes God, My presence shall*

Psalm 91.

15.

Exod.

33. 6.

shall goe with thee --- there's the speciall Promise, My presence shall go with thee. In the 15. and 16. verses, Moses said unto him, It is well thou art pleased to promise so great a comfort --- For if thy presence goe not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known, that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in this, that thou goest with us? Observe how richly Moses pleads the case with God; he questions how his grace and favour, he questions how his love and mercy, he questions how his comfort and protection could be with them in that troubled condition? unless they had his speciall presence with them: Is it not in that thou goest with us? and indeed, it is well spoken: For how should the world judge Christianity to be any thing, but a severe command? How should men beleeve that God rewarded Piety, and favoured his Saints? Or, that in every sad occasion, he would be their comfort, and protection: were it not for this, That wheresoever they go, his presence alwaies goeth with them. Beleeve it, God is Emanuel, God with us, not onely to behold us, but to uphold us also in every Affliction; and

3.2

43.2

and this is our comfort, and our consolation.

Our Saviour alludes to this, *The Father hath not left me Alone*, (that is, Alone in any of my tryalls, or in any of my troubles) *for I alwayes* John 8.
do the things that please him. Christ, when he 29.
was most assaulted, then was he most assisted :
when he was the most afflicted, then was he
the most comforted. Christ had the gracious
presence of his Father in every *Affliction*, and
so shall Christians. If they be present with
God in a waiting way, God will be present
with them in a comforting way. God hath
(*Virtute promissi*, by the obligation of his pro-
mise) engaged his presence to them, *I will* Heb. 12.
never leave thee, nor forsake thee. This is his
promise, and he will performe it. What mat-
ter is it then if we have more troubles then
others, seeing we have more of Gods counte-
nance then others? What matter if we have
more Afflictions, seeing we shall have sweeter
consolations? What need we value the
worlds crosses, or the worlds frownes, seeing
we shall have more of Gods graces, and his
smiles? Thus in the first place, *Afflictions work*
for our good, as they tend to promote comfort.

E

And

And this they do, by opening a vein of godly sorrow, and by bringing in more of Gods speciall, and immediate presence into the hearts of men.

5. *All Afflictions work for our good, as they tend to promote grace in our hearts.* Grace is a rich Jewell, and as the Apostle calls it, *It is a gift unspeakable* --- Martiall reports of a Fly, *That by a drop of Amber falling upon it, a great summe of Money was bidden for it:* Just such is the soule, a very inconsiderable thing, till Grace enrich it; if the least drop of this Heavenly Amber fall upon it, then onely is it precious. Beleeve it, Glorious things are spoken of this Grace: It is the spirituall food of Saints! It is the life of the soule, and the blessed Manna of Angels! But if you would have me to wing my expressions higher --- It is the New birth of a man, whereby he takes up another Nature, a new Nature, a spirituall Nature, a God-like Nature. As Christ was borne (and thereby took on him the Nature of Man) and was made Flesh: So Man is borne again by Grace (and thereby takes upon him the Nature of God) and is made Spirit.

fit. And here you have the *Mystery of Grace*.
Indeed there is another thing, which is as
Myſterious as *Grace*, and it is *Peace*: It is the
Feaſt of a good Conſcience, and the very
beauty of this preſent life. I mean by *Peace*,
that transcendent kinde of *Peace*, which is
Peace with God, and *Peace* with Conſcience.
This *Grace*, and this transcendent kinde of
Peace, are the two Myſterious Priviledges of
the Saints; they ſhine in conſtellation, and
go hand in hand together, like *Hippocrates*
his twins, they live and dye together. The
Apoſtles therefore in their Salutations, uſed
to ſay, *Grace be unto you, and Peace*. And in
their Valedictions, *Grace and Peace be with you*.
Not one without the other, yet one before
the other; *Grace* before *Peace*. *Grace* hath
the proheminnce; there can be no true
Peace without it: and with it, there cannot
but be *Peace*. No bleſſing comes before *Grace*,
and no bleſſing laſts longer. Now this *Grace*,
which is the chiefe Priviledge of a Belceever,
is by Afflictions Myſteriouſly wrought upon
the hearts of men.

And here I must again enlarge my Dis-
course, to shew, That the Mystery of Affli-
ctions is such, that it works this grace upon
the hearts of all Christians these foure se-
verall wayes.

Psalm 119.
54

First, By quickening our graces: Affliction
raiseth up our souls to the exercise of all Reli-
gious Duties, Thy Statutes have been my Songs;
Where, may a man aske? David answers, Not
upon the Throne; but, in the house of my pil-
grimage: There it was, that his Devotion was
more excited, and his graces more quickened.
Nothing better to make Aromaticall Spices
send forth their savour, then bruising: so, no-
thing better to quicken the soule, and to
make her send forth the perfumed breath of
true devotion, then Gods Afflicting. In pro-
sperity, amidst the confluence of all desireable
and choice pleasures, we are apt to neglect
these duties; we then but seldome worship
God, and seldome Pray: But when God
sends his Pursivants (his strong Afflictions) to
summon us, these make us run, these make
us make halt unto him, They poured out a Prayer

Psalm 119.
55

but

when

when thy chastening hand was upon them. Before, they would scarce say a Prayer, or read a Prayer: Oh, but now, *that his chastening hand was upon them, they poured out a Prayer unto him.* You may from hence see, what a difference there is betwixt our Prayers in health, and Prayers in sickness; between Prayer before, and Prayer after *Affliction*: Before, how cold, and flat were they? Now, how spirituall and quick are they? Those that before had not a tear to shed, or sigh to utter: those that before were Blocks in Prayer, Hypocrites in heart, and *Laodiceans* in affections; nay, those who before had a *Nabals* heart, a heart of stone in every duty: How are they now softened, and melted? How do they now purpose, and promise Reformation? How! oh, how do they now besiege the Throne of Heaven, with every new, and every fervent supplication? *They poured out a Prayer, when thy chastening hand was upon them.* Thus Affliction fetcheth the soule to God, and brings it upon it's knees, in it's Devotions, and Prayers. Believe it, Gods gracious Spirit is the best Schoolemaster, and sanctified Afflictions are the

the best Schoole wherein to learne devotion: I say *Sanctified Afflictions*; otherwise, in stead of being quickened, (like resty Horses) we shall goe on worse, if our Afflictions be not sanctified. However, God sees that meer love will not prevaile with us; he sees that naturally our hearts are so dull, so heavy, they must be driven up to Heaven, (mercy will not doe it) therefore is it, he useth the Spur, and Rod of his Afflictions: And these indeed excite our soules to duty, and make our graces quicker.

Secondly, *By exercising our Graces*: As every thing is most in it's excellence, when it is most in exercise; so is Grace: it puts forth the brightest colours in Affliction. Rust will eate up the best Steel, which is not used: and the best graces of the Saints would rust and corrupt, were they not sometimes exercised, and refined: Afflictions therefore, they are so many Files, that fetch off the Rust from the graces of the Saints, and renders them the brighter. Waters that stand still, and have no current, are apt to putrifie, and breed venomous creatures: and Bodies that want

want exercise, grow obstructed with gross humors : Just so doe our graces, they rust, and contract corruption, if they be not exercised. The winter of Affliction, though it have fewer Flowers, it hath also fewer Weeds : but let a Christian be never so well tempered, (like the best ground, which, if not Plowed, will be overgrowne) if the winter of Afflictions come not on him, weeds and corruptions will come upon him ; especially these foure corruptions, *Pride, Cruelty, Security, and the Immoderate love of this world.*

1. *Pride*, It is the observation which is usually made in every Age, That not onely great men, but good men too, in prosperity, while they have full Estates, succesfull fortunes, rich friends, are apt to forget themselves, and to be swell'd with Pride : *Who is the Lord*, sayes the proud King of Egypt ? *I shall be like to the most highest*, was the Language of the Babilonish Monarch. *The Voyce of God, and not of Man*, goes down with Herod. This is the elevation of Pride, which dares thus jostle the immortall Powers, and vie with the Almighty. *David* doth not onely
con-

confess his own sin, in seeing the prosperity of the wicked, *I was envious, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked*, Psal. 73. 3. But he also sheweth what sin prosperity breedeth, *Therefore Pride compasseth them about as a chaine*, ver. 6. but this golden chaine of Pride, at last strangles them, *They are brought to desolation in a moment, and are utterly consumed*, ver. 19. Indeed, what *Pliny* reports of the poysonfull herb *Aconite*, so eagerly desired by the *Panthers*, that being hung up by Hunters above their reach, they never leave leaping at it, and straining at it, till they burst themselves, and so dye. The same may I say of Pride, men in prosperity have such an immoderate desire to it, that they are alwayes spreading their sailes for the winde of popular applause to breathe upon, and alwayes using of their wings to soare high, till at last swolne to too proud a height, these fraile supports failing them, they fall, and so dye. Exemplified in *Sigismund* the young King of *Hungaria*, who beholding the greatness of his Army, said, *What need we feare the Turk, who need not feare the falling of the Heavens, being able with our Spears,*
and

and Halberts to hold them up. He shortly after received a great overthrow, he himself to save his life, being glad to skull *Danubius* in a little Boat. A presumption not much unlike *Edom's Language*, *Who shall bring me down to the ground?* --- possibly there was no man on earth, that durst accept *Edom's* challenge, when he threw down his Gantlet, and bid defiance to all worldly Powers, *Who shall bring me down?* But God accepted the Challenge, and undertook that vain boaster upon higher terms than he proposed: He tells him, *That though he set his nest* (where never man yet set his nest) *even among the Starrs*, yet thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord. God does but lift wicked men up in prosperity, as the Eagle did the Cockle-fish, that they may catch a greater fall. Yet notwithstanding this danger, how common a sin Pride is to a prosperous condition, may be seen in that Precaution of *Moses* to the *Israelites*: *Moses* warns them, *Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God* --- *Lest when thou hast eaten, and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and hast dwelt therein. Lest when thy Herds, and thy Flocks are*

Obadiah
3. 4.

Deut. 8.
11. 12.
13. 14.

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wul-

multiplied, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied. Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God — How carefull was Moses over them, and how jealous of them, lest they should forget God, who had sufficiently remembered them? Or, lest their hearts should be lifted up against him, whose hand was so often lifted up for them. But alas! all in vain's his counsell; What Moses here by way of Prophecie, is cautioning them not to doe; by way of History, he is els where reprov-
ing them for doing: *But Jesurun waxed fat, and kicked ... then he forsook God that made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.* Israel, like a fed beast, grew proud, and insolent in green Pastures: And so will the best of men do in flourishing and fresh conditions. But now Affliction puts a stop to men in this high career of their riches; it intercepts the provisions of Pride; it takes away the fuell that should increase the heate, and fire of mens Passions, and so their insolencies are abated. By Afflictions, as *Job* speaks, *God hides pride from Man.* By these corrosives, he
eats

Deut. 32.
35.

Job 33.
17.

eats out the proud-flesh, and makes us humble, and submissive : *Afflictions* are compared to Thorns ; *Behold, I will hedge up thy way with Thornes*, Hof. 2. 6. that is, with troubles and *Afflictions*. *Afflictions* are as *Thornes* ; and I may say, with these *Thornes* God pricks the bladder of Pride, and our high mindedness is cured.

2. *Cruelty*, This sin never acts above-board, or upon the Stage, but in prosperity ; it goes unseen till then, or at most, but halfe seen : halfe the wickedness of a man appears not, when he is in want, and in *Affliction*. He cannot feast like an Emperour, spend like a Prodigall ; nor can he say of his sins, as the *Roman* glutton did of his dishes, *That those are best, that cost him dearest*. No, wicked men, when they are kept to hard meate, and want : when they are under *Affliction*, when like unruly Stallions, they are tyed to rack and manger, though their lusts be not thereby absolutely mortified ; yet they are thereby so stifled, and starved, they cannot act. 'Tis only worldly affluence, and warmth, that broods and brooks corruption ; 'tis riches and power

2 Kings
8. 12-13.

that lets the lusts and wickednesses of men loose, to pursue their gain and pleasure. Hazael was a cruell man ; yet he did not beleieve there was so much cruelty in his heart, as in his heart was lodged. When the Prophet told him, — *I know the will that thou wilt doe unto the children of Israel : their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child.* Hazael answered, and said, *But what is thy servant a Dog, that he should doe this great thing ?* Well, how does the Prophet convince him ? *Elisba replied, The Lord hath shewed me, that thou shalt be King over Syria.* As if he had said, Thou shalt have much prosperity in thy hands, and then the wickedness of thine heart will be apparent ; thou art but a poor, private, inconsiderable person now, and wantst means to shew the cruelty of thy spirit : but when thou art High and Mighty, Lord over all, and King in Syria ; when thou hast all this prosperity and power in thy hands, then wilt thou let thy heart loose unto wickedness, — *and doe all this will unto Israel.*

3. Security,

3. *Security*, This is a sin which is very apt to trouble us in a prosperous condition, which *Afflictions* banish, by exercising our graces, and creating in us a great measure of sober watchfulness over all our wayes. A weak Christian with watchfulness walks safer, then a stronger Christian, that gives way to security and presumption. The presumptuous Christian, he perswades himselfe nothing is impossible, nothing is too hard to performe, nothing too difficult to resist; upon which confidence, he does not like the militant holy man, keep his Castle; but like *Goliath*, he boldly stalks forth, and dares every thing to a Combate: He thinks no Religion good, but in the house of wicked *Nero*: nor, no chastity of life commendable, but in *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*. Assuredly, this mans resolutions are dangerous! As well may the Bird escape the Lime-wand; as well may the Fish escape the Nett, as a Christian not enter into temptation. We should not therefore think our selves secure; but, as he who best knows our temper bids us, so should we doe, *Watch, and Pray, lest we enter* Mat. 26. 41 *into temptations.* Those sins that so cunningly beset

Mark 13.
37.

beset us, will easily enter (if not by violence, by deceit) if we set not a guard upon our senses. Some Angel therefore must stand at the doore of Conscience, like the flaming Sword of a Cherubim at the gate of Paradise, to examine what comes in. There must be a watch set to keep out every sin. 'Tis a generall caution, *What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.* Oh, what need hath a Christian to be ever upon his watch? what need hath he to keep strict watch and ward? That Christian, who like some over-daring Gyant, thinks himselfe secure, and sleeps upon his guard, will by his corruptions, soon be foyled: Whilst the Crocodile sleepeth, (as Historians relate) the *Indian Rat* gets into him, and eateth his entrails: So sin never enters so well, nor destroys us with more ease, as when it takes us napping upon the soft lap of a prosperous condition. But now, as the Saints are never in danger when they are watchfull; so, nothing tends more then *Afflictions* to make them watchfull. *Afflictions* open the Eyes of the Saints, and makes them look about them. *Apollonius* writes of certaine people, That
could

could see nothing in the day, but all in the night: Thus many Christians are so blinded with the Sun shine of prosperity, that whilst those bright dayes last, they can see nothing: but when the Winter-night of Affliction comes upon them, then they can discern all things, then their Eyes are opened, and made to look about them. Belceve it (as it is well observed by many) *Afflictions* are to the Saints, as the Thorn at the *Nightingales* brest, which makes her sing sweetly, and keeps her waking.

4. *The immoderate love of this World*: This is a sin which is apt to grow upon us in prosperity. When the Candle of prosperity shines upon our heads, (as *Job* speaks) and the secrets of the Lord are within our Tabernacles; when our Root is spred by the waters, and the dew lies all night upon our tender branches: that is, when we have fresh and flourishing conditions, how apt are we to have our hearts riveted, and fastned to the creatures? How apt are we to sing *Requiem*s to to our souls? and to say as rich *Dives* did in the Gospel, *Soule take thy rest, thou hast goods enough*.

2 Kings
21. 14

Heb. 12.
11.

enough for many years. How apt are we to doate upon, to idolize, and to make a God of our enjoyments ? but when Affliction comes upon us, when there is a fall of the lease upon all our comforts, when our possessions are destroyed, our hopes blasted, and our growing joyes disfloured ; we begin to love God more, and to doate less upon the creatures, and so our earthly mindedness is cured. By a long continued prosperity, even the soul of that wise King *Solomon* melted into a love of the world, and an effeminate declination in Religion, grosse humors did arrest him, and he grows youthfull in his old age, for want of an evill occurrent (the sharp Physick of *Affliction*) to recover him : God therefore stirred up an adversary unto *Solomon* --- He sent *Afflictions*, and storms of warr upon him, and these exercised his graces, purged out his corruptions, and recovered him. A tempest exerciseth the skill of a Pilot : A battle exerciseth the valour of a Souldier ; and Affliction exerciseth the graces of a Christian. That expression of the Apostle is very apt, *Now no Affliction for the present seemeth to be joyous : nevertheless,*

lest, afterward, it yeeldeth the peaceable fruit of
righteousnes, unto them which are exercised there-
by. Wars traine up Souldiers; and Afflictions
traine up the Saints: they are pleasant, and
they are profitable exercises.

Thirdly, *By encreasing our Graces.* What Natu-
ralists say of the Colewort, *That it thrives better
when it is watered with salt water:* The same
may I say of Grace, it thrives better, and en-
creaseth most, when it is sprinkled with the
salt water of *Affliction*. The growth of Grace
is commonly promoted, when God steeps it
in these brinish waves. Grace is like the wid-
dows Oyle in the cruse, the more it was pow-
red out, the more it encreased: so grace, the more
it is afflicted, the more it is encreased. *We glory* Rom. 5.
in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh 3. 4.
*patience: And patience experience: and experi-
ence worketh hope.* Tribulation worketh pati-
ence, that is, (according to Interpretations)
it encreaseth it, and carrieth it on to perfecti-
on: it is the encrease and perfection of this
grace, and of all our other graces. Christians
(like Children in their sicknesses) they wax
stronger, and wax taller, in grace, in vertue,
G and

and in goodness, in and after their Afflictions.

1 Peter
2. 7.

Fourthly, *By proving our graces*: Afflictions are for the probation, and tryall of our graces --- *That the tryall of your faith (being much more precious then of gold that perisbeth, though tryed with fire) may be found unto prayse, and honour, and glory* --- 'Tis a precious faith, which like a Star, shines brightest in the darkest night: 'Tis a precious faith, that abides triall. They say of the Eagle, *That she tryes her young brood, by exposing them to the bright beams of the Sun, and so judgeth them of the right kinde, if they can stedfastly look upon it*: May not I say, God doth thus deale with the Saints? he brings them to the hot fire of Affliction, and thereby tryes them. That grace is of the right kinde, which will abide tryall. Moses was a lofty Eagle of the right kinde; He chose rather to suffer, then to enjoy sin for a season. He preferred the Afflictions of Israel, to the pleasures of Egypt. But Lots Wife was not right, who regretting the loss of Sodom, and her sweet pleasures there, upon her tryall, *Looking back, was turned into a Pillar of Salt.*
Beleeve

Heb. 12.
15.

Believe it, it is an easie matter to professe Christ, in Jubilee-dayes, and dayes of pleasure : but give me the man who is a second Job triumphant, who is mettall to the back, and can endure all Afflictions, this is a man onely of the right kinde, this man onely is the best Christian. Thus you see in the second place, *All Afflictions work for our good, as they tend to promote Grace in our hearts.* And this they doe, *By quickening our Graces, by exercising our Graces, by encreasing our Graces, and by proving of our Graces.*

3. *All Afflictions work for our good, as they tend to promote our glory.* Afflictions are the Red Sea, which while it threatens to swallow us, preserves us. As Israel passed through the Red Sea to Canaan : So through the Red Sea of Affliction, we pass to our Heavenly Canaan. The way to our glorious Crowns, is by our earthly crosses. 'Tis a common Speech, *When the way is harder, we Ride the way the faster.* None so hard, as that which Affliction makes, and no way so good to Heaven ; the harder that way, the faster we ride. Christ himselfe went from the Cross, to Paradise ; and so shall
G 2 Christians.

Christians. If you look upon the History of
 his Life, you will finde that he was, *A man of*
Lam. 3. 1. many sorrows : Or as it is in the Originall, *He*
was the Man that had seen Affliction. And what
 greater honour can there be, then to resemble
 him ? it should be the Christians ambition
 here, as hereafter it will be his glory. When
 the Souldiers of that brave and gallant Em-
 perour *Severus*, (for greater pomp in a Tri-
 umph) were to put on Crowns of Bayes upon
 their Heads; one Christian, who was a Soul-
 dier, put his upon his Arme : And being de-
 manded the reason, answered, *Non decet Chri-*
stianum in hac vita coronari : In this life a
 Crown is not becomming. And *Godfrey of*
Bulloigne, when he had defeated the *Saracens*,
 and conquered the Holy Land ; when he
 should have been made King, and have worne
 the Imperiall Crown ; he refused it, saying,
It was not fit, that the servant should weare a
Crown of Gold there, where his Master wore but
a Crown of Thorns. 'Tis too much to live deli-
 cately here, and finde *Abraham's* bosome here-
 after. The Sons of *Zebedee* were all for ambie-
 tion, and honour ; they were for Dignities,
 and

and Thrones : but Christ called them to suffering, and to a bloody Baptisme rather : he tells them, ere they can sit with him on his glorious Throne, they must drink with him on earth that bitter Cup. I know you commend the merry worldling, who is never troubled with crosses, nor exercised with Afflictions : but excuse me, if I say, this felicity is his misery : Assure your selfe, 'tis so much pleasure here, so much torment hereafter; so much Affliction, so much Glory. We may say of every man, and to every man, who enjoyes altogether the delights of this world, as the charge is given against Babylon, *How much she hath glorified her selfe, and lived deliciously every day, so much torment and sorrow give her :* Rev. 18. 7. How much of the one, so much of the other. *Dives* in Hell, exemplifies this truth, who intreats *Abraham* to send *Lazarus* from the dead --- to speak to his Brethren, lest they also come into this place of torment. Luke 16. 27, 28. Now I cannot think, there is so much charity among the damned ; I cannot think there was so much goodness in *Dives* in Hell, that he would not have his Brethren come to the same place of torment,

torment, out of love to them, but out of love to himselfe : he then found by sad experience, the more his sins were imitated, the more was he tormented : As he had every day fared deliciously, he now every day fares miserably ; how much of the one, so much of the other. So, how much Affliction, so much Glory. The Emperour, when he had one Crown upon the point of his Sword, and another upon his Head, said, *Tertiam in Cælis*, That there was a third for him in Heaven. So, the Saints who have the Crown of tribulation here, may be assured of another Crown, a Crown of Honour ; and of a third Crown in Heaven, a Crown of Glory : *Our light Affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternall weight of glory.* We reade not, that a mans wealth, or riches, work for him a weight of glory ; but his Afflictions doe, and that exceedingly, *They work an exceeding weight of Glory* : Not that Afflictions merit Glory ; Merit is the fond Fable of the Church of Rome : they are the wayes too, but not the causes of, our Glory ; they purchase not, though they take Possession of Heaven ; they

they are the method, but not the merit of
salvation: Blessed is the Man that endureth
temptation, or tribulation: for when he is tryed,
be shall receive the Crown of life. This Crown
of life, the Crosse of our life makes way for:
though there was no Crosse, that could, or did
ever merit it, but that of our Saviours: Yet
thus much I may say for the humble, and sub-
missive sufferings of a Christian, That the
heavier the weight of our Affliction, the hea-
vier the weight of our Glory: Nay, our light
Affliction, shall work for us an exceeding, and
eternall weight of Glory. And now you see,
The Mystery of Affliction is such, That it works
for the good of all Christians: 1. By promoting
Comfort. 2. By promoting Grace. 3. By pro-
moting Glory.

James
1. 12.

I come now to the second Proposition.

2. The Mystery of Affliction should encourage,
and comfort the hearts of all Christians. Some
there are, who in stead of comforting, and
encouraging themselves under their Afflic-
tions, are complaining at the things they suffer,
and

Jonah
4. 9.

Judg. 18.
23, 24.

and are murmuring under their Afflictions: Rachel weeps, and refuseth to be comforted. Our Spirits are seldome troubled with inward corruptions ; but usually too much with outward evils. When God reprov'd *Jonah* for his Passion, *Doest thou well to be angry?* *Jonah* replyed, *I doe well to be angry, even to death.* Beleeve it, what this Prophet said of his Passion of Anger, *I doe well* --- others say of their Affliction, *We doe well to be sorrowfull: We doe well to be comfortless.* They are cloath'd in blacks, goe mourning all the day long, and think they have reason to take their Crosse heavily : When indeed (the good of the Crosse considered) they have no more reason then *Micha* had, to walk mournfully before the Lord : When the Children of *Dan* said, *What ayleth thee?* He answered, *Ye have taken away the gods which I made — and what have I more? — and what is it that ye say, what ayleth thee?* As if he should say, Have I not reason to be troubled, when you have rob'd me of my gods? Doe you think I can be comforted, when I am thus afflicted? Thus some, like this impatient man, when they have lost but
some

some superstitious Idols of their own making, some vanities, and trifling toys, (which yet they adored as gods) they are sufficiently troubled: And when they are thus Afflicted, they refuse (as if they had reason for it) to be comforted. But though this is the carriage of many in Afflictions, it is but a foolish carriage. We should say with David, *Why art thou disquieted, O my soule?* We should not say, *Why art thou not disquieted?* 'Tis dangerous to give too much way to griefe in Afflictions, and to dispute against our comforts. There are many considerations, which may administer comfort and encouragement to us in our Afflictions; especially these two Considerations.

First, If we consider the Author of these Afflictions, which is God himselfe, one who in his own time, will make all these Crosses good, and beneficiall. The distrustfull Christian under Affliction, cries out, as that impatient King of Israel --- *Oh my tormentor!* And, *this evill is of the Lord, why should I wait any longer?* But the true Beleever, when the bitter cup of Affliction is proffered to him, sayes, as Christ himselfe did, *Oh my Father!*

2 Kin. 2
6. 33.

Mat. 26
39.

H

And

And the Cup which my Father hath given me to
drinke, shall I not drinke it? He acknowledgeth
the Affliction to come from the hand of a
mercifull Father, (one, who as he tempers it
with his wisdom, so he sweetens them with
his love) and hereby he is comforted. Indeed
the carnall heart (who doth not experience
that Gods Rods are steeped in oyle and honey;
like a curious Patient, who having an ill opi-
nion of the Physician, will take none of his
Receipts) hath a prejudice against God; and
therefore, because it smarts a little, cries,
Away with the Plaister, and while the *Affliction*
lasts, refuseth to be comforted. But the gra-
cious soule, who sees the hand of God in
every condition, is comforted in every condi-
tion; and therefore takes his load from God,
as the Camell doth from his Master, alwayes
upon his knees: This man knows, 'tis neither
chance, nor blinde fortune, that hath brought
upon him this, or that Affliction, but the *Di-
vine Decree*, and the *Divine Will*; and there-
fore silently submitting to the Divine will, he
is encouraged, and chearfull. --- *Aaron held his
peace*, --- that is, he submitted, when God Af-
flicted

And him. So when the Prophet told Heze-
 kiah, Behold, all that is in thine house, shall they ^{Isay 39.}
 carry into Babylon: And thy Sons which issue ^{6. 2.}
 from thee, shall they take away. When Hezekiah
 heard all this, what said he? Good is the Word
 of the Lord, ver. 8. He is not discouraged with
 the sad Prophecie of his Afflictions, nor doth
 he dispute the case, and say, Why Lord! what,
 give up Jerusalem, the holy City, into the hands
 of Babylon? Shall the Sons descended from Da-
 vid, be destin'd to the Captivity, and Bondage of
 the uncircumcised? Or shall those who are borne
 Princes, become no better then Babylonish Pages?
 No, though this Rod was smart, yet good He-
 zekiah kisses it, and silently yeilds to this Di-
 vine correction: he knows, That though he ^{Lam. 3.}
 cause griefe, yet will he have compassion, according ^{32.}
 to the multitude of his mercies. And therefore
 he speaks nothing, but what breaths forth
 humble submission, Good is the Word of the
 Lord. Thus David was dumbe, and silent,
 when God Afflicted him: I was dumbe, I ^{psal. 38.}
 opened not my mouth, because thou diddest it. In-
 deed, there is a three-fold silence. 1. There
 is a sinfull silence, when men hold their peace

to see God dishonoured, and his Truth wounded: this silence is a loud sin; As Hieron said to *Vigilantius*, so may a man say to Gods enemies, *Meam injuriam patienter tuli* --- the wrong done to my selfe is patiently suffered; but an injury to God, is not to be endured. 'Tis a sin to be silent, when we may bring glory to God, and good unto our Brethren.

2. There is a superstitious silence: Such were those old Monks of *Egypt*, who (as *Cassian* reports) were *Umbrarum more silentes*; as speechlesse as Ghosts. What doe the loose, and disorderly rabble of our Phanaticks at this day, but superstitiously imitate them, who will not speak a word to any as they meet them, or pass by them: It was the common greeting of the *Jews*, *Peace be unto you*. Thus *David* by his Proxey saluted *Nabal* --- *Peace be unto thy house* --- Christ himself was no enemy to good manners: When he sent forth his Disciples, this was his Doctrine, *When you come into a house salute it*. And the Apostles, that they might mix New-Testament matter, with Old-Testament manners, had this forme of Salutation, *Grace be unto you, and Peace*. These

Mat. 10.
12-13.

new

John 9

new Sectaries: then they are not like unto
 Christ; they are not like unto his Apostles;
 nor are they like unto his Saints. Unto whom
 then are they like? Believe it, they have not
 only lost their Religion, but their good man-
 ners too, and are superstitiously silent. There
 is a holy silence, when the soule is at quiet,
 and submits to God in every condition. Such
 was the blessed temper of Ely, a holy silence
 seals his Lips, and he saies in holy I. In the
 Lord, let him doe what he pleaseth, 2 Sam. 13. 18.
 Princely David invites all them to a strange
 sight, Come, behold. What is the strange sight?
 what is to be seen? A very strange thing. A
 thing of great amazement. Come, behold the
 works of the Lord, what desolation he hath made
 in the Earth. Behold these desolations we
 may say, behold them we must, but how
 must we behold them? we may behold them
 with compassionate hearts: But must we be-
 hold them with complaining hearts? No,
 see how we must behold them. Be still, and
 know that I am God, ver. 10. As if he should
 say, I know you will be complaining, and say-
 ing, Why are we thus smitten? Why are we
 thus

Psalm 46
 8.

thus Afflicted? why are we thus desolate and
troubled? But here's your answer in a word,
Be still, and know that I am the Lord. Know
but, that it is a God that brings upon you
your Afflictions, and you cannot but be still,
and silent; you cannot but be still, and com-
forted: for as he is a God, so he is according
to the confession of the Prince of Prophets,
Psalm 45 Righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his
works. The Saints have experimented this,
and therefore have not been sullen, but silent,
have not been discouraged, but comforted un-
der their Afflictions; They have patiently held
their backs to the stripes of an offended Fa-
ther, and have resigned themselves over into
his hands, as knowing that he is a God, who
in his own time will make all these crosses
good, and beneficial. If this God afflict us,
then we must not be discouraged, and remain
comfortless under our Afflictions; but rather
say with the Church, I will bear the indigna-
tion of the Lord, because I have sinned against
him, Micah 7. 9. It is true, I am the Clay,
and God is the Potter, and the Clay must not
find fault with the Potter: Yet would I ex-
postulate

postulate the case, and say, let me be a
vessel of Honour, and not a vessel of Wrath:
Let me be the vocall monument of thy love
and mercy; not the dismal trophy of anger,
and thy fury: yee would submit my selfe to
his good pleasure, not knowing, it should be as
well our daily duty, as our daily Prayer, to
say as Christ did, *Erat voluntas tua*, thy will be
done.

Secondly, If we consider the nature of these
Afflictions, they are not from vindicative wrath,
but from divine love: *As many as I love I cha-*
stise. They are our crosses indeed, but not our
curst. David commends them, *Thy Rod, and*
Staffe, they comfort me. I know what David
speaks, may seem to be a Samson's Riddle, The
Philistines could not understand, how
honey should come out of the eater: So a naturall man,
(an uncircumcised Christian) knows not how
honey should come out of contrary expectati-
ons; How tribulation should work patience, and
patience experience, and experience hope. But
every strong Samson, by his experience, can
well expound this Riddle: he finds honey in
the dead Lyon, and extreame comfort issuing
from

Rev. 3
19.

Psalm 133

from our misadventure. Beleeve it, these liuing
true Christians, to whom every day doth not
yeild some honey, to whom every Affliction
doth not yeild some consolation. As the skil-
full Physician knowe how of the poysonfull
Viper, to make a wholesome Medicine, so the
heavenly Physician of our Afflictions, makes
the most precious Cordials. He turns all our
troubles into pleasures, and makes our great-
est evils beneficiall. If God afflict us there-
fore, we should not be discouraged, but com-
forted, considering the nature of these Affli-
ctions, they have a medicinall, a beneficiall
vertue in them. So long as the Physician keeps
his patient at a strict diet, and under a con-
stant course of Physick, there is some hopes of
his cure; but there is no greater danger, then
when God is weary of afflicting, and gives us
over. I look upon those *Bona malis*, that un-
checked current of the Affaires of the wicked,
to be dangerous. The *Israelites* were no
sooner fed with Qualles, but God slew the
fattest of them. And the very Heathen man
could observe, That God spares many a man
for their greater mischiefe. That man who is
foothec

soothed up under an unchecked current of
Affaires, he is like a beast fattened for the
slaughter: Or like the *Roman Oxe*, crowned
with Garlands, and gayer flowers, when he is
going to be Sacrificed. But those *Mala bonis*,
those sad troubles, which happen to righteous
men, they are (as one speaks) *Ad sanitatem*,
Medicinall, and in order to their cure: Or if
you will, they are, what *Seneca* said of *Socrates*
his poysonous potion, *Medicamenta immortalita-*
tis, Healths to the glorious immortality of
their soules, and names. These *Afflictions* al-
wayes end in consolations. Thus you see how
this *Mystery of Afflictions* should encourage,
and comfort the hearts of all Christians.

Application.

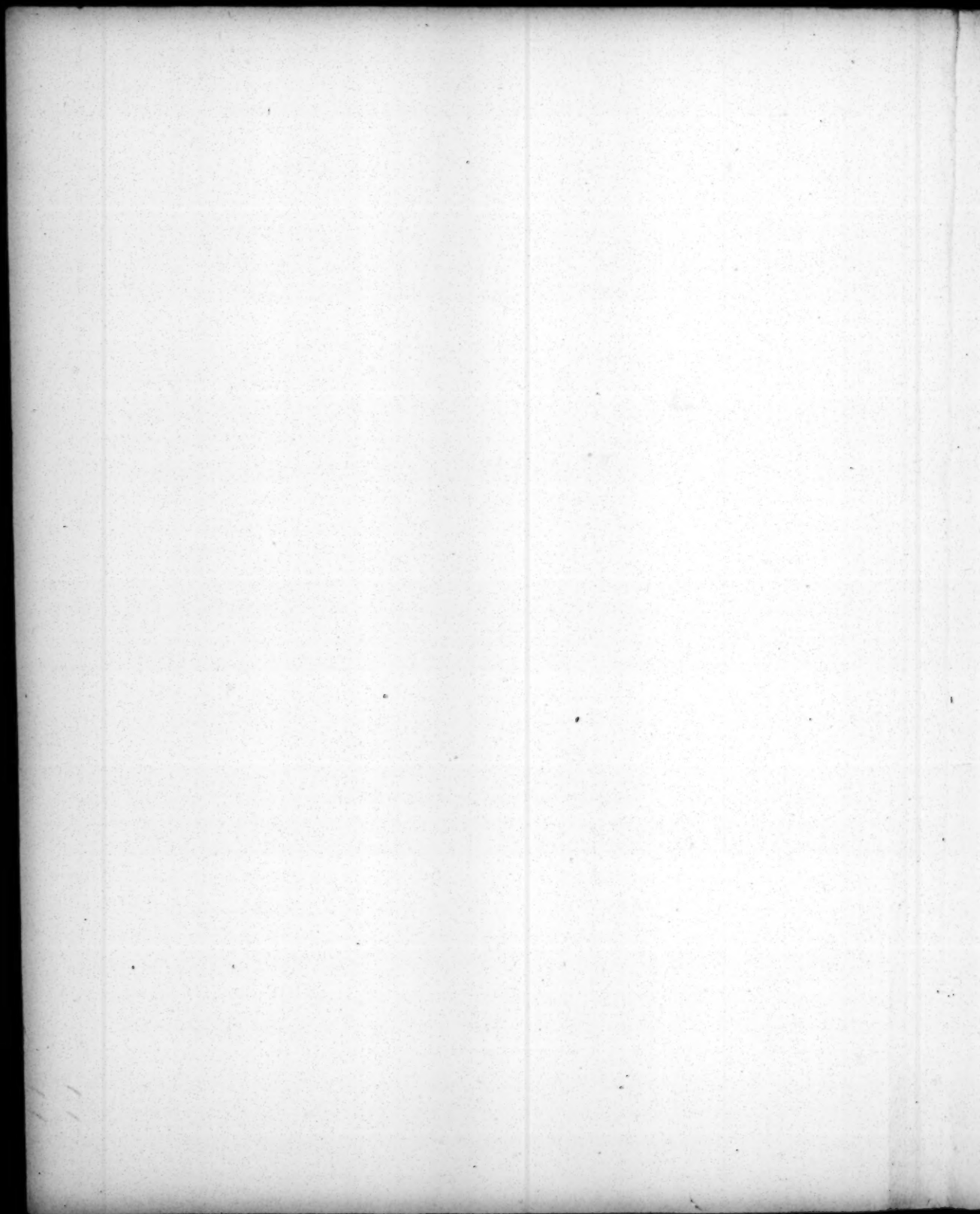
Is it so? Then this is a just reproofe for
those, who are not comforted under their *Afflic-*
tions. The true Christian, as he must not be
a dead Sea; so he must not be a raging Sea, he
must have some Afflictions, but he must have
no Passions; he should be so ballasted, as to
keep a steady course, neither lift up too much,

nor cast down too much under all conditions; nothing should put him out of this frame. Even nature doth teach Bees, not onely to gather Honey out of sweet Flowers, but out of bitter: How much more should Grace act the Admired Chymist, and extract the sweetest potions, out of the bitterest Afflictions. These two fore-mentioned considerations, cannot but encourage Christians. 1. To consider that *Afflictions* are naturally good, and beneficiall. 2. However, to consider, they come from God, who will make them instrumentally good, and beneficiall. The sanctified Christian is comforted, for he knows God is a faithfull God, and will not afflict above what he is able. It is well observed (by some) that *Sarah*, though she was *Abraham's* Wife, yet she knew nothing of his tryals, nor did she undergoe any of them: And they give this reason for it, Because she was not strong enough; and God will not make choise of a weake Champion, he will not press us with any heavy *Affliction*, unless he finde us strong. God dispenseth his *Afflictions*, according to the abilities of the Saints: He spared *Sarah* for

for her weakness, lest (as they think) the severity of those many *Afflictions* should baffle her: he layes the whole burden of those many *Afflictions* upon *Abraham*, because strong in Faith, able to endure them. Beleeve it, what *St. Paul* saith of temptation, I may say of Affliction, *There bath no Affliction taken you, but what is common to Man: Now God is faithfull, and will not suffer you to be Afflicted above what you are able: but will either make you a way to escape it, or els make you able to beare it, 1 Cor. 10. 13.* We cannot pretend an exemption from those usuall Afflictions, which in all Ages have happened unto others; but we may pretend to more consolations then others. The Saints, though they be Afflicted, they are not dejected. *We are cast down --- there's their Affliction, but not destroyed, (2 Cor. 4. 9.)* there's their consolation: They know all Afflictions are naturally good, or instrumentally good; one way or other, God will make all these things work together for the good of them that love him.

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